

## **Modernity and Gnosis: Resurrection in the Age of Globalized Monopoly Capitalism**

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The rhythm of resurrection is happiness, for in happiness the matter of the world falls away into its eternal transience.<sup>1</sup> The resurrection, correspondent to a worldly restitution which introduces immortality, calls forth the eternity of this downfall. In this manner, one would understand resurrection not as the preservation or revival of the dead among the matter of the world, but as the revelation of the arisen *from* the material world and its total transience. Resurrection is not, then, a historical event but the consummation of history which nothing historical can relate to itself on its own account, an end which is not a *telos*. The abolition of alienation, that is, the emancipation of the “real” from the self-sufficient reality in which we live, is fundamentally not a telos in Marx’s scientific project, however historical Marxisms have set out towards relating themselves to this emancipation on their own account. Marx calls this abolition “communism” and it is not the eschatological vision of a future World to Come or a singularity toward which reality fashions itself, but “the *real* movement which abolishes the present state of things.”<sup>2</sup> The proclaimed failure of Marxism to bring forth communism cannot be confronted with Marxism itself, lest we approach the aporia of a duplication of history. A non-philosophical repetition of Marxism postulates that “Marxism is *inseparable* from its failure as much as it is *irreducible* to it.”<sup>3</sup> Confronting the failure of Marxism in philosophical terms, in the way that historical Marxisms have not adequately interpreted the world and have failed to fulfill their ‘promise’, amounts to universalizing Marxism across history by detaching Marxism from the authority of this or that philosophy. We seek a *transcendental* universalization of the science, “producing the universal non-Marxist kernel not *of* Marxism but *for it and from it* at once as symptom and model, and in general as ‘materials’.” Heterogeneous to historical Marxisms, the task of non-

Marxism is to find the internal law of the poorly implemented assemblages and symptomatic formations of Marxism. This task rests on the condition that Marxism is not recognized but *cognized* as anterior to historical representation.<sup>4</sup> Non-Marxism is a *gnosis* of Marxism, calling forth a worldview which is stated in a fiction rather than a theology. This gnosis of Marxism postulates the identity of a Real foreclosed to the existing and nonexistent Marxisms and thus becomes a matter of dismantling the sufficiency of Marxism not through reference to history, capital, or philosophy, but through a *non-sufficient* conception of the Real and infrastructure which is an ontological non-sufficiency which does not contradict its being-foreclosed to the superstructure.<sup>5</sup> Such a gnostic (non-)Marxism appears as a materialism-without-matter, exhibiting the gnostic leitmotif of “the conception of matter as an *active* principle having its own eternal autonomous existence as darkness (which would not be simply the absence of light, but the monstrous archontes revealed by this absence), and as evil (which would not be the absence of good, but a creative action),”<sup>6</sup> and constitutes the instance of an *a priori* political resistance which supposes the gnostic myth of resurrection as the platform of a project of modernity for the radical left in generalized monopoly capitalism.

Gnosis is understood in Gnosticism as a knowledge of the Real as such, given-without-givenness, radically immanent (to) itself, transcendental to all conditions of thought, an identity undivided from or in itself. The knowledge of *gnosis* is contrary to the knowledge of *episteme* in that gnosis is a relation without relation. The Real which gnosis refers to is always already transcendental to the matrix of representations that constitutes the discursive apparatus through the scientific is determined as such. It is the One-in-One, the presented-without-presentation. The *a priori* political resistance of gnosis as transcendental skepticism is characterized by a pragmatic refusal of meaning, disruption of the informational relay between material power and

cognitive force, and a mode of cognition which resists the commodification of knowledge.<sup>7</sup> The gnostic practice of Marxism entails a speculative ethos. Following the dictum of the Christ in the Pistis Sophia--“*Renounce the whole world and the whole matter therein, that ye may not amass other additional matter to the rest of your matter in you*”<sup>8</sup>--one must articulate and enable the contingencies of the given, armed with only the certainty that the totality of reality is not Real, and mobilize epistemic fallibility as an engine in the effort for redefinition, invoking a conception of time *adjacent* to the present. In this ethos of non-presentness the bounding of a determinate, definitive project is continually undermined by an experimental responsiveness to epistemic, ontological, and systemic variation.<sup>9</sup> The gnostic fiction through which speculative possibility is effectuated lacerates and opens the subject towards what awaits on the periphery of epistemic certainty and functions as a vehicle for the introduction of a constituent people which carries out empirical intervention in conjunction with the transcendental effectuation. Neither empirical intervention nor transcendental effectuation alone is capable of circumventing the all-encompassing universality of capital, and therefore, a response to the penetration of capital, i.e. modernity, which resists totalizing gestures needs a ‘situated universality’ in which there is no perfect form or procedure and must orient itself towards the production of generic thought even when advocating a high degree of pragmatism, so as to escape the trappings of finitude. Since the divine spark which is arisen is absolutely exterior to representation, resurrection does not concern the issue of obliterating abstraction but of deploying the power of abstraction towards alternative modes of life and distributions of exchange, production, and consumption.<sup>10</sup> In gnosis, anti-capitalism becomes rooted in a fundamental prohibition of exchange at the level of ontology and is characterized by empirical effort toward the transcendental impoverishment of world-capitalism as self-sufficient reality.

Capitalism posits itself as sufficient to encompass the world so that anything is available for reproduction and exchange; its operational principle is an *auto-position* which is identical to its claim to determine itself beyond all empirical determinations, its claim as co-determinable to the Real. Without universalization, Marxism remains abstract and defenseless against the universality of capitalism. According to its fractional matrix, capitalism gives itself a transcendence and an immanence simultaneously, in a synthetic structure, the one overcoming the other in turn. This matrix can be read as the identity of double relation of capitalism to itself: on the one hand, a 2/3 identity (insofar as the third term, synthesis, is immanent to the dyad, capitalism lacking itself) and on the other, a 3/2 identity (insofar as the synthesis is transcendent to the dyad, capitalism in excess of itself).<sup>11</sup> Capitalism is not a totalizable system defined by the commodity-form as a specifiable mode of production. It is more than a mode of production at a more advanced stage in the development of the productive forces, but a more advanced stage of civilization, generating a world created in the process of its coming undone, its deterritorialization. Capitalism subjugates existence to the intercourse of exchange by eradicating transcendent elements of reality and replacing them with economically programmed circuits.<sup>12</sup>

The market supposes its own ontological nature according to immanence as the absolute plane of life (as is found in Deleuze). This market-driven immanentization is what is meant by ‘progress’ but the history of civilization is inextricable to the history of barbarism. The subjugation of the proletarianized masses to the property relations which bind them to their poverty and misfortune is treated as a historical norm in the name of this progress. Fascism is a cultural mutation immanent to modernization and emerges as the logical result of the ‘inhibited synthesis’ which attempts to fix a stable relation with what is radically other. The transcendental emancipation of thought from the ontological principle of exchange opens a platform of political resistance

against the domination of abstract capital and the anthropocentrism of modernity. Marx's hypothesis of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (TRPF) is not disproven by the qualitative transformation of monopoly capitalism in response to the structural crises of the 20th century. The falling tendency itself has no conclusion; capitalism has no exterior limit and it avoids reaching its internal limit (capital itself) by continually displacing it. After the revival of monopoly capitalism between World War II and the height of the Cold War, a long structural crisis warranted the globalization, financialization, and generalization of monopoly capitalism. Capital, at the highest stage of its centralization, has uncoupled from its organic body in the bourgeoisie, since now the speculator can sell what he does not even possess, and socially productive labor has become obsolete in the sense that time by virtue of itself produces profit, rather than the production carried out in that time. Samir Amin proposes the interpretation of this process as 'generalized proletarianization', which emphasizes both the proletarian status imposed on everyone and the extreme segmentation of the generalized proletariat and the concomitance of that dual process with the extreme centralization of capital's control. The segmentation of the generalized proletariat primarily arises from the strategies implemented by capital of the generalized monopolies to initiate and control the direction given to technological research, but the particular forms of this segmentation are given through the way that the generalized proletariat interacts with these strategies, the resistance of victims and the struggles that they undertake.<sup>13</sup> A program concerning the transcendental operation of resurrection consists in the radical denial of exchangeability between value and wealth. The radical left which confronts the future that is to be built must reject compromise with exchange and ignore the nostalgia of the past and illusions of identity and consensus.

An effective strategy for common struggle tends toward identifying strategic sub-objectives that allow unity in diversity. The centralization of the power of generalized monopolies completely transforms the nature of bourgeoisie and the management of political power in service of abstract capital. The contemporary globalization of generalized monopolies is not based on the decline of state power but the affirmation of its power, in that an active state is necessary for this globalization whether it is to take on the functions of the hegemonic power or to secure the submission of the peripheral societies to the demands of imperialist domination. Globalized monopoly capitalism is sustained by the relation between central hegemonic powers, such as monopolies in the U.S. and Europe, and peripheral compradors who maintain their secure relation to the world market at the cost of the livelihood of the majority of peripheral populations. Amin looks to Mao as a significant figure for deducing effective strategies for the road to socialism, noting his connection of three dimensions: 1) *peoples*, who can be constituted into a hegemonic coalition connected to the generalized proletariat; 2) *nations*, which seek liberation from imperialist domination not for the restoration of the past but for the invention of the future based on the radical transformation of their historical heritage; and 3) *states*, which are autonomous in relation to the hegemonic coalition.<sup>14</sup> The ‘resurrectionist’ program reorients modernization toward a foundation of popular participation. The socialist question of progress is a matter of reinforcing the complementarity of popular advances, national liberation, and achievements of state power. Gnostic Marxism rejects fictions which constitute populisms, nationalisms, and statisms through the violence of exchangeability and continuity and the program of resurrection can be characterized by a few pragmatic strategies which call for resistance of such fictions. These objectives are proposed by Amin as follows: (1) socialize the ownership of monopolies, (2) de-financialize the management of the economy, and (3) de-

globalize international relations. The objective of these strategies, which are aligned with Amin's concept of 'de-linking', is not a withdrawal from the world market but a calling into question the interests of capital's domination and a consequent reduction of international inequalities. In order to reverse the chaos produced by strategies of generalized monopolies, to ensure maximum and stable employment and to ensure decent wages growing with the productivity of social labor, the power of the monopolies must be expropriated through the process of nationalization. Public institutions must replace monopolies with the establishment of a mode of governance which represents the collective interests of farmers, upstream units (such as manufacturers of inputs, banks), downstream units (such as food industry, retail chains), consumers, local authorities (interested in natural and social environments—schools, hospitals, urban planning and housing, transportation), and the state (citizens). Nationalization/socialization of monopolies would abolish the principle of "shareholder value" imposed by the strategy of accumulation in the service of monopoly rents and thus detach economic governance from the authority of financial management. De-financialization restores the efficiency of macroeconomic policy and the management of credit by discontinuing its subordination to the strategies of monopoly-rentiers.

De-globalization is not a matter of eradicating global connectivity and international relations but resisting the globalized character of imperialist domination. Globalization must be reconstructed on a principle of negotiation between nations and/or states rather than submission to the exclusive interests of the imperialist monopolies.<sup>15</sup> The tasks of the radical left are more or less distinguished by their situation in the global economy: in the hegemonic centers of the imperialist Triad (U.S., Europe, Japan), the left needs to engage in building an alternative social coalition against monopolies; in the peripheries, one against the comprador classes. There is, as usual, the primacy of direct action in the peripheries toward the effort of decolonization as a

means to weaken the hegemonic bloc of the Triad and introduce the possibility of a multipolar global economy. Advancement in the peripheral societies cannot be imagined without the implementation of sovereign projects of modernization that simultaneously combine the construction of an integrated industrial system, the reconstruction of agriculture and the rural world to achieve food sovereignty, the consolidation of social progress, and an openness to the invention of a continual democratization.<sup>16</sup> Resurrection axiomatically supposes the right of the masses to change property relations on the grounds that the reality of the mode of production is determined in the last instance by the Real which is foreclosed to the movement of capital.

The gnostic Gospel of Philip explains the resurrection through the proclamation that “image must rise again through image.”<sup>17</sup> The invocation of the Real in its non-imaginary character is the permanent changing of reality in recognition of all its modes’ determination-in-the-last-instance by the Real. The arisen are revealed as their own foundation, initiating their cycle of freedom *beyond and prior*--that is, transcendental--to the historical and instrumental given. Capital overcomes its contradictions by mystifying reality, burying use-value in the register of exchange and enabling it to avoid conflict with the presupposition of the labor force. This development is not a particular response of the movement of capital to particular crises, but characteristic of capital itself. Capital is a tendency of decoding, which leads to the notion that social struggles will yield the end of ‘crisis’. To the contrary, these social struggles must be politically radicalized, so that they may overcome their own fragmentation and their exclusively defensive strategy of safeguarding social benefits, i.e., compromising with reform at the cost of radical transformation. Democratization is the transcendental impoverishment of the reality of inequality. Therefore, the radical left ought to associate the democratization of society with socialism, reclaiming the democratic question used to impose the domination of market economy

on a global scale. In the peripheries of the world-system, development must be based on peasant access to land; the continuation of primitive accumulation by the dispossession of the global peasantry (a class which makes up about half of the world population) fails to actually aid the progress to industrialization which is supposed by advocates of neoliberal globalization. The peripheral societies do not need to submit to the interests of imperialism in order to ‘integrate’ into the wealth of global capitalism--these peripheries, however ‘primitive’ their manifestations of labor and production appear, are always already integrated into world-capitalism. The ‘West’ is literally the creation of these impoverished societies, where the primitive accumulation of capital is no secret to the citizens and in fact situates their material consciousness. Revolutionary movement, as operationalized by the gnosis of Marxism, is armed with a transcendental universality which the capital-world fundamentally has no claim to. To defend the Real against the destructive indifference of the capital-world involves a project of modernity beyond modernity which is an ongoing struggle against instrumentality and a refusal of sufficient positivity. Marxism is the method by which this defense is enabled, enacting the resurrection without being an eschatology by any means.

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Theologico-Political Fragment,” in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1978), 155

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “*The German Ideology*, Part I (selections),” in *Selected Writings*, ed. Lawrence H. Simon (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1994), 120

<sup>3</sup> Francois Laruelle, *Introduction to Non-Marxism*, trans. Anthony Paul Smith (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2015), 15

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 37

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Georges Bataille, “Base Materialism and Gnosticism,” in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 1985), 47

<sup>7</sup> Ray Brassier, “Alien Theory: The Decline of Materialism in the Name of Matter” (PhD diss., University of Warwick, 2001), 224-5

<sup>8</sup> “Second Book,” in the Pistis Sophia, ed. G.R.S. Mead (Leeds: Celephaïs Press, 2007), 209

<sup>9</sup> Patricia Reed, “Seven Prescriptions for Accelerationism,” in *#Accelerate: The Accelerationist Reader*, ed. Robin Mackay and Armen Avenessian (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic Ltd., 2014), 527-8

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 535

<sup>11</sup> Laruelle, *Principles of Non-Philosophy*, trans. Nicola Rubczak and Anthony Paul Smith (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 4

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<sup>12</sup> Nick Land, “Machinic Desire,” in *Fanged Noumena: Collected Writings 1987-2007*, ed. Robin Mackay and Ray Brassier (Falmouth, UK: Urbanomic Ltd., 2011), 339

<sup>13</sup> Samir Amin, “Contra Hardt and Negri: Multitude or Generalized Proletarianization?” *Monthly Review*, November 2014, 29-30

<sup>14</sup> Amin, *The Implosion of Contemporary Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2013), 114-7

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-47

<sup>16</sup> Amin, “Contra Hardt and Negri,” 33

<sup>17</sup> “The Gospel of Philip,” in *The Gnostic Bible*, ed. Willis Barnstone and Marvin Meyer (Boston: Shambhala, 2003), 277